

**Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi**  
**GENJŌ-KŌAN: PARAGRAPHS 11-13**  
**Sunday, June 19, 1966<sup>1</sup>**  
**Lecture D**  
**Sōkō-ji Temple, San Francisco**

*When the truth—*

—the last paragraph in Page 2.<sup>2</sup>

*When the truth does not fill our body and mind, we think that— we think that we have enough. When the truth fill our body and mind, we know that something is missing. For an example, when we view the world from a boat on the ocean, it looks circular and nothing else. But the ocean is neither round nor square, and its features are infinite in variety. It is like a place —it is palace—it is like a palace. It is like a jewel. It seems circular as far as our eyes can reach at the time. All things are so. Though there may—there are many features in the dusty life and the pure life, we only understand what our study can reach. And in our study of all things we must appreciate that although they may look round or square, the other features of oceans or mountains are infinite in variety, and universes lies in all squares [quarters]. It is so not only around ourselves, but also directly here—even in a drop of water.*

In the—in the last part we have studied, he said:

*Enlightenment does not destroy the man, just as the moon does not break the water. When—a man does not hinder enlightenment, just as a drop of dew does not hinder the moon in the sky. The depth of drop is the height of the moon. The period of reflection, long or short, will prove the vastness of the dewdrop, and the vastness of the moonlight sky.*

Here he says, even though we are not aware of enlightenment, enlightenment is there when we practice zazen and when we do everything in our everyday life as you practice zazen. If we say so—if so, you may say, there will be no need to take some special

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<sup>1</sup> This date is almost certainly wrong: Four lectures on one reel-to-reel tape had been assigned the same date.

<sup>2</sup> Suzuki-rōshi is commenting on Eihei Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* "Genjō-kōan," following the translation by Kazuaki Tanahashi with Robert Aitken that appeared in: (1) *Shōbōgenzō Genjō Kōan: An Analytic Study* (unpublished manuscript, San Francisco Zen Center); (2) *Wind Bell*, 1967, VI (2-4), pp. 60-62, and (3) the [*Honolulu*] *Diamond Sangha [Newsletter]*. According to Kaz, Suzuki-rōshi handed out a printed version of the translation to students.

consideration in your everyday life or practice. And there is no need to study Buddhism, you know.

But—so he tried to correct our misunderstanding in this paragraph. "When the truth does not fill our body and mind, we think that we have enough," because you do not know what is the truth. So that is why you say there is—there will not be no need to practice anymore [laughs] or from the beginning because you think you have—anyway you have truth. You obtain truth, and everything obtain truth. And everything talks about Buddha's teaching. If so, there will not be no need even to listen to [laughs] because we know that. That is quite usual mistake for us. But it is not so. That is—why you make such understanding is because you do not know what is truth.

*When we—when the truth does not fill our body and mind, we think that we have enough. When the truth fill our body and mind, we know that something is missing.*

When truth is actually fill your body, you think that something is missing [laughs]. Do you understand what does he mean? Something is missing—"something is missing" means if you understand truth, you know, actual truth, truth is not—truth is—truth reveal itself in eternal present. Not only this moment, but also eternally it will continuously reveal itself through our activity. So what we do just now is not enough. We have to take another, you know, activity in next moment. So what we—just what we do is not enough.

That is why—that is true meaning of "to drop off our body and mind," or, for me, "nothing to grasp," or Bodhidharma's "I don't know" [laughs]. "I don't know" means there is many things to know. Because I don't know, I have to know many things. That is true meaning of truth. Truth is not some particular, you know, thing. If I say truth you think some special theory [laughs] or—theory—mathematical theory or scientific theory. But we don't mean such concrete, static logic by "truth." Truth is unconditionality or eternal reality. Reality does not take any form. That is why we call it reality. There is no other word for that. So sometime we say unconditionality. Because it is unconditionality, you know, it takes various condition. It accept various condition. If so, there should be various—there should be innumerable variety in its form and color. Then:

*When truth fills our body and mind, we know that something is missing.*

When we become one with truth, we start to take various activity according to the circumstances because we feel something is missing. So we will start continuous study, continuous practice, because we feel we should study more. When you think truth is some particular theory

or teaching, you think that is enough. I know that that is enough. So you don't want to study. But when you realize what is truth actually, and you feel what you should do, you should—you will start continuous truth—true practice.

*For example, when we view the world from a boat on the ocean, it looks circular and nothing else. But the ocean is neither round nor circular [square], and its features are infinite in variety.*

You think the truth is some particular thing—some particular, concrete theory. So you think this is truth. But it—that is exactly the same as you saying ocean is round or square. It is not. Like it is not square or round, there should be various infinite feature. "It is like a palace. It is like a jewel." For a fish it is. For dragon, it may be like a palace. For fish, it may be a jewel. "It seems circular as far as our eyes can reach at the time." It seems circular as far as our—our eye can reach at the time.

He had pretty hard time [laughs] when he went to China across the ocean—across the ocean.<sup>3</sup> So he is referring to the voyage here. "As far as our eye can reach, the ocean is circular." But at—that is only at that time. When storms come [laughs], black and dark cloud, there is no ocean. So at—he says at that time, we don't what kind of ocean we will have tomorrow. "All things are so." Everything is like this. Though there are many futures in the dirty life and pure life—so-called-it "our dirty life" or "our pure life," there are many futures. We only understand that our study can reach. We say "this is awful" or "this is wonderful," but we—only that is our particular understanding—one of the many understanding of life at that time. And in our study of all things, we must appreciate that although they may look round or square, the other future of ocean or mountains are infinite in variety, and universe lie in all squares.<sup>4</sup>

So if we understand actually what is truth, we will have this kind of feeling. So what we do is not enough. This feeling should follow when you realize the truth. "I am not so good," you may say. Why you say so [is] because the truth is within yourself. The truth, you know, says "I am not so good" [laughs]. But you—but—but if you think, "I feel I am not so good," that is self-centered idea [laughs]. Truth says [laughs], "You are not enough" [laughs]. Like some—like Fumiko Hayashi,<sup>5</sup> the famous writer—famous Japanese writer said, "This is

<sup>3</sup> In 1223, Dōgen (age 23) made the hazardous journey with Myōzen by ship to Sung China across the Sea of Japan: "through a voyage of countless miles, entrusting my transient body to the billowing waves" (Eihei Dōgen, *Record of the Baoqing Era*).

<sup>4</sup> The Kazuaki/Aitken version has "quarters."

<sup>5</sup> Fumiko Hayashi (1903-1951): Japanese novelist and short-story writer.

not my best work" [laughs]. "This is not my best work." That is so. This is not only my work. There should be various work for—for her.

"It is so not only around ourselves, but also directly here." "It is not so around ourselves but also directly here." If we say so, you know, you may look around and—and say the truth is infinite variety. "We have to watch" [laughs]—or that's what you may [laughs] say. But that is not, you know, right even. The truth is directly here on this moment right here. Don't look around [laughs, laughter]. You are—when we say something, you know, we are caught by the statement [laughs]. So he, you may say, not just around yourselves but right here. When you are standing up, you are standing on the truth [taps the table several times] right now. "Don't look around," he said.

*It is so not only around ourselves, but also directly here—even in a drop of water.*

Here we have come back to the last part [?] is of study—last paragraph: the moon is even in a drop of water. If someone ask you what is truth, you know, you may say, "I don't know"—you can say, "I don't know," or you can say, "What is it?" [Laughs.] What is it? "What is it?" means you stop and think, or you appreciate life in that moment. We are—we live in eternal present, but we even know that we do not aware of present even—present time even. We are just doing—continuously doing things one after another.

So you don't know—you are not aware of your life even. But if someone ask you what it is, you may say, "Oh, what will it be?" [Laughs.] That is the answer, you know. "Oh—oh, I am doing something [laughs]. What am I doing [laughs]? This is the answer. What are you doing? "Oh my! I am watching the fish!" [Laughs, laughter.] That is the answer. Do you understand? "What am I doing? Oh, I'm practicing zazen." That is true practice. That is true answer. "What is it?" is the answer, you know. "Oh, I don't know" is also. "What are you doing? "Oh, oh my—I don't know!" [Laughs, laughter.]

When you are actually one with truth, things happens on your life in that way. That is true life. When you discuss about the truth, what it is [laughs]—the more you discuss, the more [laughs] you will be separated from the truth. But when you know that, it's all right—if you are answering to the question—someone's question who do not know what is the truth. So you are trying to answer. Just you say, "Don't be silly, I am just eating." [Laughs.]

*When a fish swims in the ocean, there is no end to the water, no matter how far it swims. When a bird flies in the sky, there*

*is no end to the air, no matter how far it flies. However, the fish and the bird do not live—leave their elements.*

It just fly. It just swim. And there is no end to—to the—for the fish. There is no end of the water or sky for the fish or bird. And fish does not realize it's swimming. A bird does not realize it's flying. But where the fish swims, where the bird fly, there are water or sky.

*When the use is large, it is used largely. When the use is small, it is used in a small way. Though it flies everywhere, if the bird leaves the air, it will die at once.*

So that you practice Zen is that you practice enlightenment. So enlightenment and practice is not different. So he says, "Use—when use is large, it is used largely. When the use is small, it is used in small way." But you cannot compare which is large what—which is small, which is good and which is bad. So each practice is absolutely—each practice is enlightenment itself, as when a bird flies there is sky.

Anyway, it is impossible to be diverted [?] from the enlightenment for us. "When the use is small, it is used in a small way." It follows anyway. And how it follows—it follows in the same way, with the same value. There is even—there is no two—two kinds of water for small and big fish. Water is same.

*Though it flies everywhere, if the bird leaves the air, it will die at once.*

"Though it flies everywhere"—though some big bird like eagle flies—will fly everywhere, but even—even so, if a eagle said, "I can fly anyway now. I am big enough to fly. So I don't want any more sky." [Laughs.] If he say so, the eagle will—may die at once [laughs]. So in this sense, there is no big eagle or no small sparrow. Sparrow and eagle is the same—are the same. Not different at all. Anyway, they must fly in the air.

*Water makes life and air makes life. The bird makes life and the fish make life.*

Water and—water and—water and fish, sky and bird, you may say [are] different, but actually it is not different. So he says:

*Life makes bird and life makes the fish. There are further analogies possible to illustrate, in this way, practice, enlightenment, mortality and eternity.*

There may be various dualistic ideas in our thinking, but practice and enlightenment, mortality and eternity are the same in its true sense. So is the other dualistic—dualistic thinking.

Now—

Here is problem:

*—if a bird or a fish tries to reach the end of its element before moving in it, this bird or this fish will not find its way or its place.*

So he says true practice will be established in defilement [?]. Before we attain enlightenment—before we [are] aware of enlightenment, we attained enlightenment. Because if a bird or a fish tries—it is impossible for a bird or a fish to know what is air or water before they move in it. So enlightenment should be attained before we [are] aware of it. [Laughs.] Do you understand? True practice should be established before we attain enlightenment—before we know what is enlightenment. Do you understand? If you move in the practice, you cannot, you know [laughs], know the end of air or water. As you cannot know what is enlightenment or what is defilement before you move in—before you practice it, when you practice it, you know, enlightenment is there. If you doubt it, you are trying to know what is enlightenment—if you are a fish [laughs] or a bird who wants to know—who wants to practice, who wants to move in it after you realize the end of the water or sky.

*If a bird or a fish or a fish tries to reach the end of its element before moving in it, this bird or this fish will not find its way or its place. When we find our place at this moment—when we find our way at this moment, the practice follows, and this is the realization of truth.*

—in its true sense.

Pretty difficult [laughs] to accept it. Pretty difficult to be a fish [laughs] or a bird who is just move in water or sky. Because we are not a fish or sky, we, you know, try to know the end of the sky or water before we move in it [laughs]. May be quite natural for you to want to know what is enlightenment, what is water or sky before you practice or before you move in. That is why I'm trying to, you know, explain what is enlightenment, and Dōgen-zenji worked so hard to explain what is enlightenment. But before he write so many works, he said so [laughs]—he said this way—he said this way. He worked—he will—he worked so hard to let you know what is water, what is sky. But yet he says, you should not, you know, try to—if you say after I understand Buddhism intellectually, quite well, I will study Buddhism.

Don't say so, he says. That is like a bird who try to move in—move in the sky after he knows the end of the sky.

Of course, we do not ignore the intellectual understanding of Buddhism, and especially someone who have—who have time to explain it intellectually. It is their duty to explain it intellectually. But we students for—for the students, it is necessary to start practice you understand completely what is Buddhism. You will have no time [laughs] to realize what is Buddhism.

Thank you very much.

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Source: Original City Center tape. Verbatim transcript by Adam Tinkham and Bill Redican (2/20/02).